

# Japan Christian Activity News

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Sing to the Lord a new song,  
his praise from the end of  
the earth.

(Isaiah 42:10)

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The Year of DRAGONS



## DISSOLUTION ORDER AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) which is a fellowship of 95 member Churches and 15 National Councils in 17 Asian countries, was founded in the year 1957.

On December 30, 1987, the Minister of Home Affairs of the Singapore Government ordered the dissolution of the CCA in Singapore under the requirements of the Societies Act. The Rev. Munetoshi Maejima, NCC General Secretary makes the following appeal to all individuals and churches who are concerned about the future of CCA ministries.

The mandates for the ministries of the CCA are provided by the General Assembly of the CCA which meets every five years and is composed of over 300 church delegates from all over Asia. The ministries are carried out by the staff under the guidance and supervision of the General and Executive Committees which have as their members representatives from Asian churches. It is therefore evident, that the ministries of the CCA are carried out with the active support and involvement of Asian churches.

It is most unfortunate that the Singapore Government should have deemed it necessary to 'dissolve' the CCA in Singapore.

The ministries of the CCA arise out of the Christian faith and the belief in our Lord's promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth. The vital aspects of these ministries are expressed in witnessing to the poor, the underprivileged, the discriminated against and marginalized persons in Asian societies.

At this critical juncture our prayers are for the CCA, particularly staff members and their families which have been adversely effected. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our faith in the ministries of the CCA and assure it of our continued support.

## Meditation

Christmas was the beginning of the long road to the Cross. We have to ask why Jesus had to walk the way of the Cross.

In making clearer the meanings pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, Jesus told the parable of the laborers in the vineyard as such is revealed in Matthew 20:1-16.

It is difficult to understand this story within the context of common categories.

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The real challenge for us as we read this parable, is to be seen in the context of our particular point of view. If we read this story from the point of view of the person who worked 8 hours in the vineyard, the story and its implications are not reasonable. Persons who serve the church faithfully for 8 hours each day will often view critically those who come to the church on Christmas day only. However for others, this story provides the good news of liberation.

When I was involved in day-laborer programs in Kamagasaki, Osaka, I realized that many professional day-laborers were criticizing the Christian work there by calling it just another form of dependency creation in those who cannot find work for the day.

With these experiences as background, I read this Bible story and come to see an ordering of LOVE which goes beyond the boundaries of common value systems and common justice. When the ordering of LOVE and its related understandings become our own, we experience good news and freedom.

The joy and blessings of God as seen in Christmas are not for Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, but rather these blessings come upon the poor and the alienated in human societies. The Christmas story provides very different understandings which contrast sharply with common mental constructs.

The work of the Christian Conference of Asia is carried on with the same orientation as seen in the Christmas story. The majority in society enjoy security by oppressing minorities. Throughout Christian history we come across evangelists who were not welcomed by the people.

The life of Jesus is seen in the words: "Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you." (Matthew 20:14) Ecumenical work should follow the meanings expressed in these words. We must place the roots of our activities in the love of Jesus. Herod could not see Jesus and he could not hear His words.

The ministries of the CCA are to remain in and with the suffering people and the

sojourners, by providing signs of liberation and the joys of Christmas.

Related Story pp. 7-8

## THE AINU MINORITY OF JAPAN

by Sanae Ogawa

I am an Ainu woman - and one of the aboriginal people of Japan. We have our own culture, language, and religion which are different from the majority culture of Japan. Ainu people have lived peacefully in the north-east areas of the archipelago; in Hokkaido and the Chishima and Saghalien Islands, maintaining a self-reliant economy.

Ainu people have lived in harmony with nature. Each aspect of creation had its own role and we lived together with salmon, bears, deer, foxes, birds and insects. We were a hunting people in this context.

About 150 years ago, without any prior notice, the Yamato Japanese government took away the land we were living on and placed us under their rule. Our lands, forests, and rivers were all brought under their control and we were called thieves if we cut a tree down in our own forests. When we would catch bears and deer on our own lands we were told that we were stealing. We were imprisoned under Japanese laws if we fished salmon from our own rivers. Ever since then, none of the Ainu rights have been recognized by the Japanese government.

The assimilation policies of the government were enforced on the Ainu people and the Yamato Japanese took away our culture, language and religion.

In this way the identity of the great Ainu people was lost, and the way of autonomy among our people was taken away and our lives have been threatened. Poverty, among, and discrimination against Ainu are the most painful realities.

In 1899 the Japanese government promulgated the Hokkaido Original Native Protection Laws in order to pursue predator



colonial policies among the Ainu people. This law is still in effect and it does not recognize our ethnicity because it refers to us as the original natives.

The Japanese government has enclosed us in limited land areas as show case agricultural people thereby ignoring our hunting and gathering background.

With this law came Japanese schools and education for Ainu children and we were forced to speak the Japanese language. The use of Ainu language was prohibited. Any ethnic education such as the reading of the original poems and stories of our ancestors, was completely prohibited.

The laws of the invaders were written in such a manner as to allow them to look down on us as an inferior race and this generated discrimination against the language and culture of the Ainu people. The history of Japan's invasion against the Ainu is the history of Ainu resistance.

Now, the Ainu people are now fighting for the elimination of the Hokkaido Original Native Protection Laws and are trying to establish Ainu laws that will protect our own identity in order that the majority culture of Japan recognize the Ainu people as a minority, having its own culture and language as distinct from that of the majority Japanese. The purpose of such laws should be to guarantee the basic human rights of the Ainu people and provide respect for Ainu identities.

Now, the Ainu people are working for the elimination of discrimination against us, restoration of economic self-reliance, and recovery of Ainu language and culture. However, regrettably, the Japanese government has never willingly recognized the existence of my people.

In December of 1987, in a report to the United Nations Human Rights Center under the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Japanese government publicly recognized the Ainu people as having their own religion, language, and culture. The government at long last recognized the existence of our people on this land but still our rights continue to be denied. In other words the government's attitude still is to propagate the belief that

there are no minorities in Japan and thereby to reject Ainu and other minority rights contrary to the conventions contained in the International Covenants on Human Rights. The government's thinking is rooted in a theory of state and national hegemony which denies the existence of other peoples and other cultural identities in Japan.

We, the Ainu people, are proud of our aboriginal background and demand recognition and protection of our human rights. Since our ancestors lived in rich and respectful harmony with nature, we oppose the present government condoned but ruthless destruction of our environment through the unnecessary felling of trees, the building of massive industries which cause environmental destruction, and the creation of the massive threat to our future generations that is contained in the introduction of nuclear based electrical power plants.

By demanding the elimination of the old Native Laws of Japan, and the establishment of new laws for the Ainu people; and by calling for ratification of the International Covenants on Human Rights; we, the Ainu people, make solidarity with oppressed minorities the world over. We demand that our human rights to be recognized and protected.

ETEKE KANPA (Let us clasp hands together!)

Ms. Ogawa is participating in the Aborigines Conference in Sydney, Australia for the week starting January 23, 1988. This conference is being held for and with Aborigines and sponsored by the Australian Council of Churches, in opposition to the Australian government's planned 200th year anniversary celebration.

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### **The Sashiki Church and the Emperor System**

by Rev. Osamu Taira

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On the occasion of the National Sport Tournament in October of 1987, the government forced upon Okinawa a plan for the



visitation of the emperor to these islands in order to once again move to further strengthen the tenno (tenno = emperor) system in Japan.

Those who would welcome the emperor and those who were opposed to the imperial entourage squared off in confrontation over this issue.

The following materials provide an indication of the stance of the Sashiki Church (the Kyodan - United Church of Christ in Japan, Okinawa) as it moved in opposition to the emperor's visitation to Okinawa.

One afternoon in July of 1987, a member of the church said, "I would like to demonstrate my opposition to the emperor's visitation to Okinawa through a hunger strike." Several members agreed with him and took up the issue as one of the concerns that the church should deal with. After visiting the remains of the nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima, Buraku communities, Koreans in Japan, Okinawan people in Osaka and day laborers in the Kamagasai area; nine young people from the church came to the conclusion that they would have to oppose the emperor's visit to Okinawa.

These young persons brought themselves into dialogue with other members of the church after prayer services on Wednesday nights.

They discussed whether or not I, as the pastor of the church, should be present in the meetings. They finally decided that they did not want me to partake in discussion for two reasons:

1. Whatever decision may be reached, should be one that came entirely from the young people.
2. There was also concern that outsiders, in hearing the deliberations, might think that there was too much of the pastor in the outcome.

On August 26 the following nineteen signature statement was presented to the church.

I. After reading once again the Kyodan Confession of War Responsibility we have come to the conclusion that it is

time to witness our beliefs by "Fearing God but not human beings." by making known our opposition to the emperor system and emperor's visitation to Okinawa.

2. We do not want the emperor to come to Okinawa. We pray for the church to oppose this.

3. We spent two years in study of the historical realities by reading various resources from the 40 years of the Kyodan's history and we asked ourselves why we carried out such un-Christian activities. More people died because of state authority without the presence of Christ permeating among us. We confess our sin of retaining a faith so shallow that we are only able to say "Christ is Lord" when there are no obstacles in our path.

We reject structures which discriminate against minorities who cry out under an unjust social system. We must learn that the past was built under the emperor system and that the national sports tournament is nothing more than the occasion to sing hymns to the emperor. We have learned from the Bible that authority must incorporate ever and ever corrected responsibilities.

Two hundred thousand Okinawans were killed in the war under the compulsion to sustain the emperor system. We believe that the emperor should only come to these islands after he has made deep apologies to the people living here.

We cannot remain silent in the face of the fact that the emperor system will be greatly strengthened by his visitation to our islands.

4. We need great courage to oppose the emperor system while some families are welcoming him. It is our Christian witness to oppose the emperor's visitation to Okinawa.

5. To the elders of the church we would like to emphasize the fact that we must not be seduced by such words as: "The emperor as the symbol of the state is coming to Okinawa to offer his thanks to the people." In reality, the emperor is at the top of a social system that places



him in the position of a god as indicated by Japan's history. We must be watchers over the times constantly reconsidering the Confession of War Responsibility.

Unless we of the Sashiki church clearly oppose the emperor's visitation to Okinawa we will not receive the blessings of the resurrected Christ.

5. We were not able to perceive our sins of war with critical understanding without having to carry the cross of Christ. We must learn from the dark past during times when the emperor was worshipped as a living god. The church made the great mistake of not objecting to the emperor system. We must discuss and think about the implications of the emperor's visit to Okinawa and what the church should be doing in this regard. We ask for a special church assembly to deal with this issue.

With appreciation for being a branch of the resurrected Christ.

3:30 A.M.

August 23, 1987.

Prior to the statement, the elders of the church decided to have a congregational study session including a pastoral presentation on the subject after the worship service and to start a signature collection movement in opposition to the emperor's visit.

The day set for these deliberations was beset by a typhoon and the session was moved to September 6. The elders decided to have a special congregational assembly on September 13 after the service in order to discuss the issue.

The special assembly was attended by thirty one people from a congregation of fifty with ten observers. After long and serious discussions as to the church's understandings on the issue, voting took place and twenty people voted for the church's statement in opposition to the emperor's visit while four opposed said statement.

The main reasons posited in opposition to the statement were that such decisions should be on an individual basis but not by the church as a whole. Also there was concern that such a statement in opposi-

tion to the emperor system might cause problems for the future ministry of the church because of its being opposed to the general trends of society, and others felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge vis-a-vis the emperor system.

The church passed a statement having three headings:

1. Based on our confession of faith we oppose the emperor system.
2. Based on our confession of faith we reject the trend toward being sucked into a dangerous reconstruction of the pre-war social system.
3. Based on our confession of faith we oppose the emperor's visitation to Okinawa, this stance being seen as part of the ministry of the church.

The church decided that this was to be just the beginning of a continuing and ongoing study of the emperor system. We then prayed for God's glory on the earth.

(Summary / translation of an article appearing in the January 1988 issue of FUKUIN TO SEKAI by Shinkyo Shuppan)

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### Religions and the Emperor System

by Iseko Kawase

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Prime Minister Takeshita paid an official visit to the Ise Shinto Shrine on the first day of the new year to report to the gods as to his assuming leadership of the nation. In this article opposition is voiced to this kind of combining of state and religion, said practices being prohibited by Japan's constitution.

My name Iseko, means child of Ise. The word Ise, is the name of a well known Shinto shrine which provides the spiritual base for the tenno (emperor) system. The Ise Shrine is the main shrine of the Imperial household and is the locus of the deification of said family. In Japan's attempt to enforce assimilation of expatriate foreigners, many Korean children have been forced to go to the Ise shrine



to worship.

When I was born, my grandfather went to worship at the Ise shrine and in the process gave me the same name that labels the shrine. Later, when I became a Christian, I had problems with my own name.

However, after learning of the historical backgrounds of the shrine, I came to understand that there were people who had acted in opposition to the shrine and had therefore also suffered from the domination created out of the shrine system. In this connection I felt that I could share the pain of those people who had also given me the courage to oppose the oppressive power invoked by the authority of the shrine.

In its beginnings the shrine was not established by the imperial household, but rather it was created out of the folk religion of the local people. People from various locations came together at the shrine as a result of meetings on the way or in travelling to the shrine. People discovered the joy of worshipping at the shrine.

Just before the Meiji Restoration in 1867, which was the beginning of Japan's so-called modern period, farmers demonstrated against the feudalistic domination of the land owners and came together in this struggle at the Ise shrine. Worshipping at the shrine became popular among farmers and it became the center of farmers' movements as they sought to organize themselves against oppressive systems and social structures. This was called the "Thankful" or "It's OK" movement, and became ever more popular.

The Meiji government elites made use of this people's energy for nation building by tapping said energy under the absolutist powers given over to the puppet emperor. In this way the emperor system became the founding system upon which Japan's modernization was built.

For these purposes the superimposition of the emperor system onto the Ise Shrine became essential to the imperial household in order to strengthen the myths surrounding the origins of the imperial line and thereby further increase the authority of

the imperial state. In order to inject symbolic power into the superimposed system overlaid on the Ise shrine, state Shinto was organized under the aegis of said shrine, providing thereby a combination of the imperial authority and the spiritual sentiments of the Japanese people.

The imperial system formed the backbone of Japan's invasion of other Asian countries during the 15 years of war and this powerful system was created by the rulers of Japan who used said system as a means of manipulating people so as to again garner support for the system itself.

My grandfather went to Ise shrine and his neighbors understood his act as being motivated out of patriotism. In all of this my grandfather was used in the support of his nation's invasion of other Asian countries.

When my grandfather came home from the Ise shrine I was born and he gave me the name Iseko as a result of his enthusiasm derived from worshipping at the shrine.

Because of my name I have become very sensitive to what state authority does and can do to control the political alignment and simple spirituality of the people.

At the same time I cannot help but feel pain for the people who suffered under Japan's colonial policies as I am torn by the depth of Japan's responsibility for such wartime criminality.

In this regard the military leaders built national Shinto shrines in the countries that they invaded and enforced Shinto worship in these shrines. Those who refused to worship the emperor at these shrines were killed or imprisoned.

It can be said that Christianity had to face the same problem vis-a-vis Japan's Shinto religion. St. Paul's mission was very successful and he built many churches around the Mediterranean and in Asia Minor.

During the second and first centuries B.C. many farmers and slaves revolted against the oppression of the Roman empire. Ancient records indicate that folk religions



supported people's movements against the domination of the Roman Empire.

However, after the missionary journeys of St. Paul, resistance against Rome weakened. In other words, the will of the people to resist Roman oppression was redirected into building churches as communities and therefore the energy to resist the Romans decreased.

It is said that the desire of the people for freeing themselves from oppression was pursued in the context of obeying the edicts of the Roman state rather than attempting to bring about a victory over the oppressive rulers. These factors and backgrounds provided the energy that increased Paul's mission effectiveness.

When religion deals with concepts of spirituality only without seeing social and political realities with a critical eye, it is then more apt to be used by state authority for its own egoistic power garnering purposes and within this context the human hope for liberation is crushed.

The same trend can be seen in the Christian history of Europe. We still remember clearly the fact that the Christian nations of Europe colonized so many locations in Asia, Africa, South America, and the Pacific islands.

Through Japan's modernization, prohibitions against Christianity were lifted. Japanese Christians welcomed the fact of religious freedom which was guaranteed by the imperial constitution although they knew that they were controlled by an emperor system based state authority, as the source of absolute power.

During the 15 years war, Christians were happy to be permitted by the government to continue in their religious activities within the context of following the orders of state authority in undertaking the formation of the United Church of Christ as required.

At that time the United Church of Christ leaders reported to the state authorities at Ise shrine that all Christian organizations in Japan had been united and also prayed at said shrine for the continuation of the combined Christian organization.

During Japan's military domination of other Asian countries many shrines were built in foreign lands as a result of colonial policies, and Christians, with the exception of a very limited few, did not accept prophetic roles in opposition to government policies, but rather supported the government by sending appeals to other Asian Christians, asking them to follow the conqueror's orders. Are we returning to conditions similar to those which existed in our dark past?

On the basis of these understandings, I remain unalterably opposed to Prime Minister Takeshita's visits to the Ise Shinto Shrine.

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## MORE CCA NEWS

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On December 30, 1987, thirty police officers occupied the CCA offices in Singapore and ordered the offices closed and foreign staff expulsion within two weeks.

### PRESS RELEASE FROM SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT

The Government has today ordered the expulsion of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), a regional ecumenical organization registered as a society in Singapore. The Minister of Home Affairs has ordered the dissolution of the CCA under S.24 of the Societies Act, revoked the Employment Passes of the 5 CCA foreign executive officers in Singapore, and given them two weeks to wind up their affairs and leave Singapore.

The Government has taken these actions because the CCA has breached the undertakings it gave in 1974, when it applied to move its headquarters from Bangkok to Singapore and registered as a society, not to indulge in any political activity or allow its funds to be used for political purposes.

The CCA has been using Singapore as a base to support "liberation movements" in other Asian countries, helping to fund pro-communist movements, solidarity conferences and exchanges for political activists and



dissidents.

Through the "CCA News," its monthly journal published in Singapore, the CCA seeks to persuade its readers to involve themselves in radical political activities. The "CCA News" carries editorials exhorting readers to take up issues which have nothing to do with the Christian faith. It highlights reports of church-state confrontations and appeals for ecumenical solidarity for Christian dissidents in trouble with the authorities. It regularly publishes articles on liberation theology including interviews with liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez and Father Edicio de la Torre.

The CCA has provided covert support for radical activists in Singapore itself. Recent investigations have established that the CCA was responsible for starting the Jurong Industrial Mission (JIM) project in 1969. JIM was used by leftists and Marxists like Tan Wah Piow, Paul Joseph Lim Huat Chye and Vincent Cheng; all of whom were involved in the Marxist conspiracy, as a cover to stir up industrial unrest in the Jurong factories in the early 1970s. Following complaints of its interference in industrial disputes, JIM was closed down in 1972.

The CCA also provided Vincent Cheng with financial support, both when he was studying at the Trinity Theological College in the mid-1970s and later when he was working as a "Workers' Organizer" in 1983-84. In this capacity, he ran "Organizers Training Sessions" and "social analysis" workshops attended by several of the Marxists conspirators arrested recently.

The CCA took care to conceal its direct association with Vincent Cheng. In 1976, the CCA arranged with the Japanese branch of CCA-Urban Rural Mission (URM) to channel funds direct to Vincent Cheng, so that the CCA Secretariat in Singapore did not have to get "involved." Similarly, the funds which Cheng received while working as a "Workers' Organizer" came from the CCA-URM in Hong Kong.

CCA members have mounted a campaign against the recent arrest of the Marxist conspirators. CCA's subsidiary bodies in Hong Kong -- the Committee of Asian Women,

the Documentation for Action Groups in Asia, the Asian Committee for People's Organization and the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) -- as well as some of its member Councils of Churches, have sent protest letters to the government. The AHRC was one of the three organizations which came to Singapore in JULY 87 on a "fact-finding" mission. They subsequently issued a lengthy report which concluded that the activities of those detained "should be defended and applauded," disregarding the fact that the detainees were involved in a conspiracy to support and destabilize the country to establish a Marxists state.

The Government will not allow any foreign or regional organization based in Singapore to meddle in the internal affairs of Singapore or to use Singapore as a base for political activities involving other countries. The Singapore government does not presume to judge the rights and wrongs of liberation theology movements in other countries. But by promoting political causes in the region and supporting activists in Singapore, the CCA has clearly breached its undertaking not to engage in political activities. The CCA is being used for purposes prejudicial to Singapore's interests, and has therefore been expelled.

December 30, 1987

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The CCA Program Committee will meet as planned in Thailand in the latter part of January.

In order to support our brothers and sisters involved with the CCA as well as provide support for CCA staff and families, we are in need of your prayers, and especially your financial contributions. Please send contributions to the National Christian Council in Japan (NCC/J).

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Happy New Year to all Dragons Out There

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